

CHAPTER 6

Redesigning the EdD at UCL Institute of Education: Thoughts of the Incoming EdD

Program Leaders

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INTRODUCTION

UK Context for Doctor in Education

Professional Doctorates were introduced to the UK in the 1990s. The UK Council for Graduate Education report found that the number of Professional Doctorate programs in the UK grew from 109 in 1998 to 308 in 2009. For the Doctor in Education (EdD) alone there were 38 EdD programs in 2009, with some 2,228 students.

Growing numbers of professional doctorates in the UK lead to their inclusion on the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) qualifications framework. Within this framework they were described as: "Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge" (QAA, 2008, p.25). This contribution to professional knowledge has enabled professional doctorate programs, such as the EdD, to recruit a body of students not usually attracted to traditional PhD programs. EdD students often come into the program with a wealth of professional knowledge and looking for ways to develop research skills and attain an advanced qualification, often without the desire to make the transition into academia (QAA, 2011). The professional doctorate was therefore able to respond to criticism from

employers that PhD students lacked the wider applied subject knowledge, practical experience and generic skills necessary in the workplace. (Taylor, 2008; Owen, 2011).

EDD PROGRAMS AT UCL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

The EdD program at UCL Institute of Education has been established since 1996. Since then the program has undertaken several redesigns and developments such that in 2013, there are three variants of the program: EdD (Home), EdD (International) and EdD (Dual Award with NIE Singapore). The EdD (Home) recruited largely a London/England based cohort and the EdD (International/Dual) recruited almost exclusively an international group of students. The programs were treated as separate programs and the students did not meet those on the other EdD program.

All students had a supervisor to guide them through from the start of the EdD program to their thesis. Each variant had its own range of taught courses based on intensive face-to-face delivery and work by e-mail with a tutor for assessed coursework. During the research phase the students also had access to a program of workshops designed to help support their journey through independent research. The offer was a well-respected program that drew students from around the world with the EdD alumni recommendations being the main source of recruitment for the program.

In September 2013 the primary author of this chapter became the program leader for all three variants of the EdD program leader at UCL Institute of Education with the secondary author becoming the Deputy EdD program leader (and then IFS course leader in September 2014). This merger of leadership was an innovation in itself as previously the programs had been operated separately with different program leaders; although the

EdD (International) and EdD (Dual) were initially spin off of the EdD (Home). This chapter provides an account of how, as the incoming program leaders for the EdD, we were able to cast a fresh pair of eyes over this very respected program and enhance it through four main innovative ideas:

1. Providing greater flexibility for students and access to a wider group of critical friends through program merger.
2. Enabling more engagement with critical friends through innovative use of the VLE (Moodle).
3. Allowing the EdD students to find critical friends in the PhD student body through the use of PhD courses.
4. Complete overhaul of the IFS workshops to focus on the process of research rather than more research methods.

More details on the reasons for these developments can be found in Hawkes and Taylor (2015). This chapter will outline the developments and their link to critical friend theory.

Greater flexibility through program merger

In September 2013 EdD programs followed two distinct routes with no discourse between the student bodies. The EdD (Home) program was delivered on three Friday/Saturdays a term and recruited largely London and the South East education practitioners. The EdD (International) and EdD (Dual), called EdD International henceforth, was delivered in block delivery of 6 days (Monday to Saturday) and recruited globally. This separation between the two programs was largely due to the separation of program leadership.

Looking at the content delivered, it was clear that the only differences between the programs was the mode of delivery (week or weekends) and the optional courses offered (three options were available for the EdD (Home) and all EdD (International) students took international education), later in the chapter we will return to these options and how this was addressed. The three taught courses (Foundations of Professionalism (FoP), Methods of Enquiry 1 (MoE1) and Methods of Enquiry 2 (MoE2)) were in essence the same courses run twice as were the workshops for the IFS and Thesis. This provided the option to be able to merge the program together under the umbrella of one EdD program and give students a choice at each term which delivery mode they would select.

The merger of these two programs provided students with a degree of flexibility that had previously been lacking with regard to the face-to-face delivery as well as providing a starting point for the development of online versions of each course. The new program started in September 2014. Students were asked at interview which delivery they preferred for term one. Between interview and induction 2 of the 35 students starting the program-changed modes for term one, this increased to 4 students changing modes in term two and 5 in term three. Whilst most London based students remain on the Friday/Saturday delivery and most Internationals remain on the week long delivery, there has been movement in both directions between delivery modes and we have avoided the handful of interruptions required each year previously, which meant students who could not make the sessions had to wait a year to rejoin the program. This has enabled students who have built up connections with others on the program not to lose touch with these valuable critical friends.

Table 1 UCL Institute of Education, EdD structure

Pre 2014			Post 2014	
Year of Study	EdD International	EdD Home	Year of Study	EdD
Year 1	Foundations of Professionalism		Year 1	Foundations of Professionalism
	Methods of Enquiry 1			Methods of Enquiry 1
	Methods of Enquiry 2			Methods of Enquiry 2
Year 2	International Education	Optional Course	Year 2	Selection of Courses from PhD Programme (RTP)
	Portfolio			Portfolio
	IFS Proposal			IFS Proposal
Year 3	IFS		Year 3	Selection of Courses from PhD Programme (RTP)
	Thesis Proposal			IFS
				Thesis Proposal
Year 4 – 7	Thesis		Year 4-7	Thesis

In order to establish and maintain connections between the two groups of students a single

induction event was held on the Saturday before the first week of teaching. All but one of the 35 students attended and although some may not meet again in person there is evidence of their engagement with each other on the discussion forums and other tools on the VLE. Cohort development is a critical part of any EdD program, as it is often this cohort that helps the student through, especially at difficult times. The shared induction and shared online resources provide the tools for the students to engage with each other. There is evidence of this continued relationship online especially with those who migrate between groups. To promote this development of a wider cohort to develop more options for establishing critical friends from 2015 each course will share the first two days together, with weeklong delivery changing from Monday to Saturday to Friday to Thursday, which will enable all students to meet on Friday-Saturday.

ENABLING MORE ENGAGEMENT WITH CRITICAL FRIENDS THROUGH MOODLE

Moving to a single EdD program has enabled the program team to invest time in developing our use of the VLE (Moodle) in supporting our students. The development of good quality resources to support the face-to-face provision and the creation of virtual alternatives to face-to-face sessions, which maybe missed due to life events, has formed the basis of a more blended delivery mode from 2014/2015. In addition the development of these enhanced Moodle sites will form the basis of an online version of our EdD program, which could be offered from 2015/2016.

The second core course (Methods of Enquiry 1 MoE1) has extended the development of the enhanced Moodle sites further to include online activities to share

between students on the two face-to-face modes as well as the use of peer feedback on draft assignments using the Moodle forums. This development has been very well received by the students, especially for those on the weeklong delivery who have felt more engaged with the program when not with us in person. Clearly there is a cost in terms of staff time especially setting up tasks and moderating them, but it is hoped that a reduction in the need for staff input to assignments and the need for resits will help to mitigate this. Largely the development has been well received by staff and students.

The use of combined Moodle sites has also enable the students to develop their own independent critical friends groups. Students with similar research interests, regardless of mode of face-to-face delivery, are seen on the Moodle site instigating chat and discussion between sessions. Whilst in the first year of the program it is too early to tell if this will continue into the research phase, it is encouraging to see that development of the VLE resources has been fruitful in many directions.

EDD AND PHD STUDENT CRITICAL FRIENDS

In the merger of the two EdD programs the issue of option courses was especially tricky. As noted above in the first term of the second year, the EdD students completed an optional course. The EdD (Home) students had a choice of three courses (Leadership and Learning in Educational Organizations, Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, Rethinking Education: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Learning and Teaching) whilst the EdD (International) students all completed the International Education course. It was clear that these options would need revising but there was little will to do so as the courses were not formally assessed, although they contributed to the portfolio of practice.

Rather than revisit the options the team decided to remove them completely and replace them with a student selection of courses from those offered to the PhD students within the Institute. Given that these courses would be more helpful during the research phase it was decided that 30 hours of these courses would be selected from the PhD student's Research Training Program (RTP) and taken at anytime in the second and third year of the program.

This innovation has been taken in light of the agenda within the Institute of Education to blur more the line between PhD and EdD students in an attempt to enhance the EdD recognition as a valid route to a doctorate more widely. Access to the RTP will provide students with insights into doctoral level work and also provide those on a more traditional PhD route to see the excellent work undertaken by our EdD students.

For those who wished to select the previous options, comparable courses can be found in the RTP. For those wishing to explore other areas available this development helped to broaden the curriculum offered without developing new EdD options. In addition, students will be able to develop critical friends in the wider research student body. Whilst the PhD students may bring a larger academic understanding of the field, the EdD students will contribute to these discussions their professional practice and experience, that many PhD students lack. We will need to wait until 2015-2017 to see the impact of these innovations but the idea was warmly welcomed when proposed by the EdD student representatives and EdD current students/alumni.

DEVELOPMENTS IN RESEARCH PHASES – THE IFS

Context

Sue Taylor (an author of this chapter) had been involved with the EdD since 2001: as a student; a tutor across all taught courses; a supervisor, and a course leader for Methods of Enquiry 1 (MoE1) (home) taught course. Consequently, she has have seen many changes but nothing as radical and potentially transformational as proposed in 2014.

She shares the vision of the new program leader to support widening participation into professional doctorates being mindful that student characteristics have changed over the years. The replacement of the optional courses with access to the RTP for the PhD students has enabled a radical rethink of the Institution Focused Study (IFS) Workshops with the intent of developing an holistic approach to student transition from taught-course to research-phase. This transition might be seen as fundamental to the future success of students completing their EdD.

What is the Institution Focused Study?

The Institution Focused Study (IFS) is an interim piece of research following the taught-course phase and must be successfully completed prior to moving into the thesis phase. It might be considered akin to the upgrade from MPhil to PhD.

The purpose of the IFS paradoxically is explicit yet vague: perhaps due to the way it is conceptualized and articulated to both students and supervisors. The Student Handbooks state:

The purpose of the IFS is to enable you to carry out a small-scale research study normally based upon your own “institution”... You should also show how the proposed study will contribute to your

professional understanding and development and to the “institution” on which your research has focused (p. 71, EdD International Handbook 2011/12; p. 77 EdD Home handbook 2011/12).

The Supervisor Handbook does not explicitly discuss the IFS whereas MPhil/PhD upgrade is mentioned. EdD supervisors’ access to IFS information is via student handbooks.

At the end of the taught-course phase supervisors ‘approve’ a portfolio of assignments and feedback together with a 2,000 word reflective statement. This is usually the first time supervisors engage with students’ research since agreeing to supervise at the point of application (for some, 18 months before-hand).

Students are advised but not compelled to build on their taught-course phase and develop their proposal (MoE1) and their pilot of a method (MoE2) and submit an IFS proposal. The purpose as articulated to students (and supervisors through the EdD Handbook) states:

The IFS will build on concepts; understanding and skills that you have developed during the taught courses, and may build on work you have carried out for these courses. Although it is not necessarily tied tightly to the thesis, it may inform the thesis and permit the evolution of ideas and understanding for the thesis, or provide the foundation from which the thesis will develop...reflecting on the taught elements of the course in relation to your own institution; identifying a problem for investigation and locating the research in its context; reviewing relevant literature and investigating how far

it has informed an institutions policy documents; conducting a pilot investigation prior to the thesis; investigating a range of institutions similar to the one to be investigated in depth in the thesis; acquiring specific knowledge of the institutions required for the thesis; conducting an investigation complementary to that for the thesis (p. 72, EdD International Handbook 2011/12; p. 78 EdD Home handbook 2011/12).

The IFS then can but does not necessarily serve as an interim piece of research to establish potential to write and work at doctoral level (paralleling the MPhil/PhD upgrade). The above extract illustrates the vagueness of purpose.

IFS workshops therefore, were and are designed to supplement individual supervisions.

Why Change?

Previous IFS Workshop structure extended MoE2 focusing on more methods ‘training’:

The Research Weeks include practical workshops on planning and doing research, collecting and analyzing data and helping you in the particular challenges of researching an institution (p. 73, EdD International Handbook 2011/12; p. 79 EdD Home handbook 2011/12).

Having reviewed IFS proposals it was evident that students are not wholly aware of the purpose of the IFS many failing to propose research of suitable scale and scope. Perhaps something was being ‘lost in translation’ about the purpose. It therefore seemed appropriate

to redevelop the IFS taking into account the redesign of the EdD. Redevelopment of the IFS is designed to support students' understanding of the general principles of the IFS and of individual independent research being able to make the transition from taught-course to research-phase seamlessly.

The quality of previous IFS proposals suggests too much emphasis on 'methods' training rather than focusing on transition from taught-course to independent research-phase.

Aligning the IFS within the EdD Re-development Framework

The proposed structure of the IFS from 2014 can be divided into three main themes:

1. A focus on project-management and big conceptual ideas;
2. An andragogical approach to adult learning (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1990) to develop independence in the research process;
3. How to manage your supervisor.

Table 2 provides an overview. The proposed changes are designed to ensure student equity and alignment with the principles of EdD redesign. The seven sessions are the same irrespective of mode of attendance and are designed to support students make links between taught-course, IFS and thesis-phases.

Table 2 Proposed IFS Structure

Session	Theme
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1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From portfolio towards IFS 2. Managing your supervisor (1) 3. Sharing opportunities
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What makes a good proposal – project-management 2. Sharing opportunities
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peer review of proposals 2. Working with your supervisor (2) 3. What is an IFS? 4. Sharing opportunities
4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposal to IFS 2. Argument and structure 3. Sharing opportunities
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of previous IFS' 2. Working with supervisors (3) 3. Sharing opportunities
6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing up the IFS: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Getting down to detail b. So what? Contribution to practice 2. Sharing opportunities
7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final thoughts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Submitting the IFS b. Link between IFS and thesis 2. Thesis proposal and formal review (upgrade)

A further common element has been a sharing opportunity at each session. Face-to-face sharing is supported with online activity in-between IFS Workshops. Students' understanding of andragogy will facilitate their willingness and ability to engage and develop self-support networks. This has a proven track record on the Institute of Education's (IOE's) PGDip Social Science Research Methods. These workshops and the online sessions provide an opportunity for the students to obtain thoughts from their critical friends.

Students are currently encouraged during MoE1 to keep a research journal but this is not a requirement. Within the redeveloped IFS, students will keep an online research journal via the IOE's VLE (Moodle). This requirement supports students' reflections on their methodological decision-making as well as on their transition from taught-course to research-phase.

The developments on the IFS workshops will help to inform the development of the Thesis workshops in 2015, which we hope to move towards a flipped classroom strategy. The students who have engaged with the online resources and/or attended the workshops have found these to be helpful. In the evaluation of the IFS proposals this year more students were proposing ideas that were more manageable in 12 months of research and being more mindful of the research process.

CONCLUSION

We are often fearful of making large scale changes to established and successful programs like UCL Institute of Education's EdD programs. It is therefore our privilege to have been given the opportunity and support to undertake such an extensive redesign of this well-loved program. The developments outlined above were informed by student requests (to have more engagement with other research students and more online resources), program team insights (listening to the issues faced on the coal face and the experience of colleagues) and administrative staff concerns (around frequent interruptions due to inflexible program structures). In taking bold steps in program development these must be supported by the department and based on the collection of evidence. They also need to be evaluated, and this chapter is one of those publications that will come from this evaluation of our EdD redesign.

The strength of any EdD program is the quality of the cohort it has. Much of the learning on the EdD is from the sharing of experience between the EdD students. By its nature the EdD program is well suited to critical friends group and with the start of developing these in our first year as part of the redesign we hope that these groups can help to support the students throughout the program. There is much scope to do more as the program becomes more embedded.

Finally, we would like to urge program teams and program leaders to be willing to think creatively at time of program revalidation and institutional change. Such processes will be much better used as opportunities rather than administrative burdens to create truly innovative program for our EdD students.

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